



Faculty Grievances and Appeals



Policy Statement

As an institution of higher education, Marywood University brings together a faculty, administration, and governing board united in a common bond of academic purpose. Essential to the fulfillment of this purpose is a mutual recognition of institutional integrity and individual human rights, along with an understanding of the respective roles of the several entities which constitute this educational organization.

Circumstances may arise at times, however, wherein a grievant--full-time, part-time, or pro-rata--may question decisions which affect his/her professional role in the institution. To assist in the resolution of these matters, a series of guidelines for grievances is herein set forth.

Definitions

Grievance: A grievance refers to any disagreement between two parties. A grievance identifies a complaint one party has against another party for some alleged wrongful action on the part of the second party.

Grievant: A Grievant initiates a grievance.

Types of Issues That Can Be Grieved

It is understood that procedural rather than substantive factors provide appropriate areas of review, and the Faculty Grievance Committee will not attempt to substitute its judgment for that of the decision-maker(s) involved in the case.

Thus, the Faculty Grievance Committee will hear grievances concerning:

- 1) Allegations of violation of academic freedom resulting in: denial of tenure, promotion, or sabbatical leave; non-reappointment.
- 2) Allegations of impermissible discrimination. Tenured and non-tenured faculty are protected against illegal or unconstitutional discrimination, or on any basis not relevant to job performance, and includes, but is not limited to, race, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation
- 3) Allegations of inadequate consideration resulting in: denial of tenure, promotion, or sabbatical leave; non-reappointment; or termination of employment due to retrenchment.
- 4) Allegations of violations of procedures used in rendering decisions in numbers 1 and 2 above as set forth in Chapter 2 of the *Faculty Handbook*.

Procedures regarding dismissal, suspension, and sanctions of faculty members are in the *Progressive Discipline*

policy.

Should a grievant allege cause for grievance in any matter not identified in the above guidelines, the grievant may consult the Faculty Grievance Committee. In such circumstances, the Committee's first decision is whether the complaint is appropriate and sufficiently serious to merit consideration.

Persons Against Whom Grievances May be Directed

Fundamentally, a grievance may arise from an allegation of improper implementation of a procedure or process leading to a decision. The person(s) or body who perform(s) that procedure or process is (are) the subject(s) of the grievance. Thus, a grievant may direct a grievance against the person(s) or body responsible for the decision identified herein.

The decisions or actions of the Faculty Grievance Committee or Ad Hoc Hearing Committee may not themselves be grieved.

Procedures

Informal Procedure

- 1) A member of the faculty must initially discuss a complaint with the person or body responsible for the action to which the grievant takes exception in order to determine if a resolution is possible.
- 2) A complaint must be presented within (10) calendar days of the occurrence or discovery of the alleged violation.
- 3) No grievance may be filed without the initiation of this informal complaint procedure.
- 4) If the grievance still exists after step one the grievant initiates a consultation with the Vice President for Academic Affairs in order to try to resolve the matter.

Formal Procedure for Filing a Grievance

- 1) The Faculty Grievance Committee is convened.

Faculty Grievance Committee

The Faculty Grievance Committee consisting of three tenured faculty members and two alternates (also tenured) is specifically charged with responsibility for resolving matters of grievance and appeal. The Faculty Senate conducts the election of this committee. Faculty currently serving on the Rank and Tenure Committee or the Faculty Development Committee are not eligible for election to this committee.

The term of each member extends for three years, with one person replaced each year. An alternate will be identified at each election. Any member of the Grievance Committee who has had any prior involvement in a case under consideration must recuse him/herself. The Grievance Committee shall annually elect a chair-elect who will succeed the Chair.

Grievance Process

The grievant may consult the President of Faculty Senate for assistance in contacting the Faculty Grievance Committee Chair. The Chair should be provided with a written statement setting forth, in detail, the nature of the grievance or appeal and identifying the person(s) or body against whom the grievance or appeal is directed; this document may also include a proposal for resolving the issue. A grievance must be filed within thirty (30) calendar days of the occurrence or discovery of the alleged violation but not fewer than five (5) calendar days after the initiation of the informal complaint.

In considering the grievance or appeal, the Faculty Grievance Committee will take the following steps:

- 1) The Committee notifies the decision maker(s) that a grievance has been filed.
- 2) The Grievance Committee requests from the grievant written information regarding the issues. The Grievance Committee also requests from the decision maker(s) written statements describing the basis for the decision being appealed or grieved, as well as any attempts to settle the matter informally. This information shall be held in confidence by the Grievance Committee. At this point in the process, the information gathered is solely for review by the Committee and is not to be shared with either party involved.
- 3) At any point, the Grievance Committee may request additional information in writing from the grievant and from the decision-maker(s).
- 4) If after completing the above steps, the Committee determines that the grievance is improper or unsubstantial, or that sufficient time had not yet been allowed for its normal resolution, or that there is no evidence of improper action on the part of the decision maker(s) which would constitute a legitimate grievance, the Committee will communicate this determination to the grievant and the decision maker(s).
- 5) If the Grievance Committee determines that there was inadequate consideration or violation of procedures (see No. 3 and 4 under Types of Issues Which Can Be Grieved above), the Committee will return the case to the decision maker for reconsideration.
- 6) If the grievance is deemed appropriate for mediation, the Chair will appoint a Mediator from the University. The Mediator does not represent either party. Any party may object to the Mediator on the grounds of actual or apparent bias or conflict of interest and submit such objections to the Chair in writing. The Chair will review the objections and may replace the mediator.
- 7) The Offices of the Vice President for Academic Affairs or Human Resources may be consulted by the Mediator on mediation procedure or other matters involved in the grievance.
- 8) The Mediator shall try to resolve the grievance within thirty (30) calendar days of formal submission to the chair. With the consent of both parties, the period of mediation may be extended for a short period of time. If the grievance is not resolved within the thirty (30) calendar days, the mediator will advise the chair of the committee in writing that the issue has not been resolved. If a mutually accepted agreement is reached, this will be communicated to the chair of the committee.
- 9) Grievances not appropriate for mediation or grievances not resolved through mediation shall be referred to the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee. All evidence collected will be passed on to the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee.
- 10) If the Faculty Grievance Committee recommends a formal hearing, in cases of violation of academic freedom or impermissible discrimination, an Ad Hoc Hearing Committee will be created to conduct a formal

investigation and to arrive at a recommendation for resolving the issue.

11) The Grievance Committee will make a summary report of its activities at the end of each academic year to the Faculty Senate. No details relevant to the privacy of the participants in any cases will be included in this report.

Ad Hoc Hearing Committee

The Ad Hoc Hearing Committee shall consist of three members, selected by the Faculty Senate Executive Council, from a standing committee of fifteen tenured Faculty Members elected for one-year terms by the faculty at large. The Faculty Senate conducts the election of this committee.

Each party shall have two challenges without stated cause regarding membership of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee. No member of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee shall have had any prior involvement in the case.

If the three-person Ad Hoc Hearing Committee cannot be chosen from the fifteen members of the standing committee, the Executive Council of the Faculty Senate is empowered to conduct a special election to obtain fifteen additional members with terms of one year.

The Ad Hoc Hearing Committee must select a chairperson.

Ad Hoc Hearing Procedures

- 1) The Ad Hoc Hearing Committee is empowered to gather information and documents specific to the case of the Grievant, conduct interviews, hold a hearing and take actions as are necessary to investigate the grievance to the extent that the law and University policy permit. The Ad Hoc Hearing Committee will provide recommendations in writing forty (40) calendar days from the date of its official appointment.
- 2) All Hearings are closed to anyone other than the parties and their advisors, members of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee, and any witnesses invited to testify by the Committee. The hearing may be audio or video recorded and a written record will be maintained. The hearing is not a legal proceeding. At the beginning of the hearing, all procedures will be made known to the parties, and all information will be kept confidential.
- 3) Each party to the grievance may have one advisor during the hearing. The advisor may not participate in the hearing.
- 4) Strict rules of legal evidence will not be binding upon the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee and evidence of probative value in defining issues may be admitted.
- 5) The hearing record will be used exclusively as the basis for findings of fact and for arriving at a decision.
- 6) Upon reaching a decision on the issue and a recommendation for action, the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee will provide a summary written report to the petitioner, the person(s) named in the grievance, and the appropriate administrative officer and the President.
- 7) After receiving the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee, the appropriate administrative officer will review the recommendation and notify the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee and petitioner whether the recommendation has been accepted. If the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee is not

accepted by the appropriate administrative officer, the administrative officer will review it with the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee.

8) No details relevant to the privacy of the participants in the case will be included in the notice from the Hearing Committee. Public statements and publicity about the case by the participants will be avoided until the proceedings have been completed, including consideration by the President

Action by the President of the University

Following the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Hearing Committee, should the petitioner desire further consideration of the issue beyond the immediate administrative channels of the University, the President may be requested, within twenty calendar days, to review the case.

This review will be based on the record from the committee hearing and may provide opportunity for argument, oral or written, or both, by the principals. Then the President will then make the final decision.

Responsibility for Expenses Incurred in Grievance and Appeal

Expenses incurred by the grievant are the responsibility of the individual. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

Cost of an advisor.

Travel expenses for advisor, witnesses, or others engaged by petitioner.

Cost of preparing any documents and copies thereof.

Withdrawal of a Grievance

The grievance can be withdrawn at any point in the process.

Non-Retaliation

Grievants will not be adversely affected for exercising their right to file a grievance, regardless of outcome.

Grievants will not be subject to adverse consequences for either initiating a grievance or in presenting evidence on behalf of a grievant. Anyone who violates this mandate can be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Related Policies

- [Academic Freedom](#)
- [Disability Grievance Procedures](#)
- [Civil Rights Policy](#)
- [Civil Rights Complaint Procedures](#)
- [Sabbatical Leave for Faculty Member](#)
- [Non-reappointment of Faculty Member](#)

- [Promotion of Faculty Members](#)
- [Evaluation of Faculty Members](#)
- [Retrenchment of Faculty](#)
- [Tenure](#)
- [Progressive Discipline](#)

History

10/02/92 - Proposal returned to committee of Faculty Senate by College Committee on Policy

11/13/92 - Proposed policy dated 3/13/92, as amended, recommended by College Committee on Policy to the President

04/26/93 - Presidential approval affirmed with publication of the President's Memo

03/20/98 - Revision proposed by Faculty Senate approved by the President of the University as recommended by the Policy Committee of the University

04/29/11 - Revision approved by the President of the University as recommended by the Policy Committee of the University

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